

February 9, 2009

JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE ENVIRONMENT TESTIMONY

Re: HB-06312 and HB-06313 State Support for Raw Milk Regulation

Senator Edward Meyer, Representative Richard Roy and other distinguished members of the Joint Committee of Environment, I want to thank you for this opportunity to address HB-06312 and HB-06313.

I am in favor of both bills.

My request is rooted in my desire to prevent any families from having to endure the pain and mental anguish that my wife and I experienced after our 3-year-old son had contracted E. Coli O-157 from consuming tainted raw milk.

In an effort to feed our children the healthiest possible foods, my wife had learned of the purported benefits of raw milk through several well-known parenting and alternative medicine websites. Our local "health food" retailer even had raw milk displayed next to the gallons of pasteurized milk; we had assumed that if this highly reputable retailer was willing to sell this product without any warning label, then it was safe for us to consume.

Unfortunately, as I had mentioned previously, there was no labeling on the product to indicate that there was a potential risk of E. coli, campylobacter, or other bacterium being present in the milk, despite the best efforts of producer to test their products before release to retailers. Within a week of our son's initial consumption of raw milk, he developed severe gastrointestinal distress. Two days later, our son was in the Pediatric ICU suffering from acute colitis and acute renal failure; and surgery was required to insert a catheter into his abdomen so that the medical team could begin peritoneal dialysis immediately. Eleven days of dialysis, 24 hours a day, ensued until our son's kidneys began to function again. All told, we spent 21 days in the hospital with our son. This caused undue stress on us, our family and our friends who had supported us through this ordeal.

After hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical expenses, and countless trips to CCMC for check-ups and blood draws, we still do not know what the future holds for our son. He is now 3 years old and is on blood pressure medication twice a day to protect his kidney functions. His future is uncertain and may require kidney transplantation if the damage done to his kidneys is severe enough. All of this as a result of trying to give your child what many claim to be a "magic elixir."

By providing a more informative label, consumers still retain the right to purchase this product, but one can no longer say that they were not informed of the potential health risks associated with the consumption of raw milk and raw milk products. This proposed bill does not result in a "skull and crossbones" consumer advisory as some opponents have claimed, but rather an informational warning for those who might be most severely

affected by consuming tainted raw milk. Furthermore, by requiring those interested in purchasing raw milk/raw milk products to visit the location at which the product is produced, both the consumer and the retailer have the ability to assess each other's respective knowledge of the product.

Concerning the additional testing required as part of the proposed bill, this is simply an attempt to bring all raw milk producers in-line with what has been established as protocol in the highly limited number of states that allow for the sale of raw milk. No one wants to see a small farm be put out of business, but what is more expensive- the cost of testing, or the cost endangering the lives of consumers from another outbreak of E. coli?

Respectfully,

Bryant A. Piccioli

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bryant A. Piccioli", followed by a horizontal line.

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